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Play Script: Treed

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PLAY SCRIPT

Treed

Thomas Kee

Synopsis: Lane and Parker are trapped on opposing ficus trees, floating on an island of recycled plastic bottles the size of Texas. They grapple with the subtle differences between action and self-deception.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Parker 50s, any gender, business-like.
Lane 30s, any gender, well intentioned.

PLACE

Two ficus trees standing next to each other atop a place submerged in recyclable plastic bottles.

TIME

Tomorrow afternoon

ACT

LANE and PARKER are clinging to two dilapidated ficuses in pots on top of separate blocks. Two chalk lines are etched horizontally across the bases of the blocks just above a pile of empty recyclable plastic bottles.

An unseen force shoves a pile of empty bottles toward the blocks, causing the pile to rise closer to the top of the lines.

LANE: This is bad.

PARKER: So you keep saying.

LANE: We've reached a tipping point.

PARKER: Thank you Malcolm Gladwell.

LANE: Don't you see a problem here?

PARKER: I see that you see a problem, but then YOU have no faith in US.

LANE: (optimistically) Us? You and me?

PARKER: Not us, us. Them us. We. Not you.

LANE: Oh.

PARKER: I mean, you too... IF you can finally see the situation for what it is.

LANE: Which is what?

Pause.

PARKER: (inquisitively) You tell me.

Lane starts to climb down.

LANE: I'll show you. THIS IS BAD.

PARKER: Whoa! Show me what exactly?

LANE: We're on top of a giant, ever-expanding mountain of garbage.



PARKER: Garbage?

LANE: (timidly) Garbage, un-recycled bottles, plastic-

PARKER: -Well which is it? Is it garbage, is it un-recycled bottles-

LANE: -it's obvious.

PARKER: Is it? Is it really? You see, this is the problem with you people-

LANE: (offended) YOU PEOPLE!

PARKER: (backpedaling) People like you. Your... type. The sky is always falling, the walls are always melting, we're always on the brink some kind of hippy flashback nuclear meltdown. You've got no pride, no optimism.

Pause.

Can I ask you a question? How come you think you're so much smarter than God?

Pause.

LANE: Than God?

PARKER: God made US. We made this. Therefore...

LANE: God made this?

PARKER: Exactly.

LANE: A syllogism.

PARKER: You don't need a thesaurus to know which way the wind blows.

LANE: You paraphrased Dylan.

PARKER: And Dylan paraphrased THE BIBLE.

LANE: The "pile" is touching the line. It's ALMOST OVER THE LINE.

PARKER: Now it's a pile. A minute ago it was garbage. You wonder why people are confused.

LANE: What do you call it?

PARKER: I call it opportunity.

LANE: Opportunity?

PARKER: God's will. You look down from your ivy-covered-

LANE: -it's a ficus.

PARKER: Ficus-covered TOWER, casting aspersions, calling things garbage. I have faith.

LANE: There's a faith-based solution to the problem?

PARKER: The "problem," as you call it, is a collectivist failure of the hundredth monkey effect.

LANE: Pollution?

PARKER: Recycling. But the truth of what you call "garbage" is that each bottle, each container, is an economic BIOSPHERE. A habitat of people consuming-

LANE: -and wasting.



PARKER: -drinking caffeinated beverages, becoming alert, growing, developing type two diabetes, being treated, employing doctors, pharmacists, morticians, embalmers. It's the life cycle. Thousands and thousands of opportunities.

Pause.

LANE: The "opportunities" are almost over the line.

PARKER: I see that.

LANE: You see that? Terrific!
(starts to climb down) I think I saw a shovel backstage-

PARKER: (stopping Lane) These things are CYCLICAL.

LANE: The pile... the "opportunities" keep rising.

PARKER: Opportunities breed opportunities.

LANE: So you ADMIT IT!

PARKER: (defensive) I admit we are in an "uptick."

LANE: So let's take the shovel-

PARKER: Let's take the longer view.

LANE: How? We're up here.

PARKER: Perspective is the new truth.

Pause.

LANE: That's good.

PARKER: You have to step outside the rubber room of your own biased sources.

LANE: I'm in a tree.

PARKER: Yes, you are.

LANE: It's not a rubber tree.

PARKER: Have you done an impact statement on this "shoveling"? Who's going to red-team you? You're a consensus of one.

LANE: You?

PARKER: I do have a different lens.

LANE: Who's going to red-team you?

PARKER: (frustrated) I'm only trying to do what's right for US.

LANE: Us? You and me?

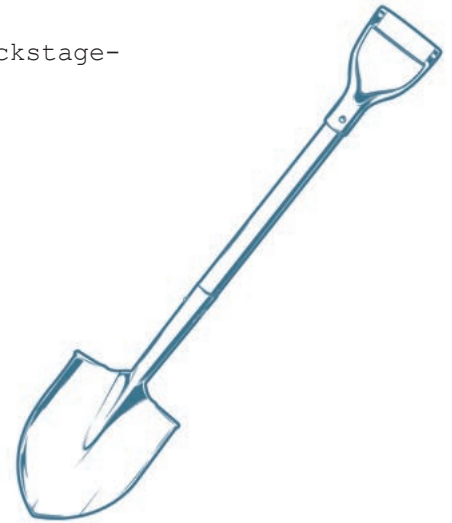
PARKER: Stay with me. (referring to audience) Them US.

LANE: (nodding) Oh, themmm. US.

PARKER: Consensus. It's when elitist academics take a break from bombarding everyone with FACTS and actually listen to people.

LANE: Consensus is hard. We're all individual snowflakes. Each one of us a complicated pattern of heredity, experience, thermodynamics, and decay.

PARKER: But if you squint your eyes like this... They both squint.



LANE: Like this?

PARKER: (squinting hard) Like THIS. Take in a little less reality.

LANE: I can't see anything.

PARKER: Exactly. Now we look an awful lot alike. Right?

LANE: Everything's dark.

PARKER: Unifying. Humanizing. It's what keeps us from eating each other when we get hungry.

LANE: I'm hungry.

PARKER: (evangelical) Perspective. Think of everything we have in common.

LANE: (eyes still closed) I'm frightened when you make sense.

PARKER: Let go of the anvil of your self-defeating narrative. Float outside your comfort zone. There are known knowns and unknown knowns.

LANE: Like Wile E. Coyote. I got it.
(opens eyes) I lost it.

PARKER: Take it easy. Don't react; ACT. Leadership means being the first to follow the inevitable trend.

LANE: I'm "on it." Watch this. (to the audience) Raise your hand if you have a rectum.

Little reaction from audience.

LANE: Go ahead. We will reach a consensus right here. Raise your hand if you have a rectum.

Some people raise their hands.

LANE: (to Parker) Why didn't everyone raise their hands?

PARKER: An unknown known.

LANE: But everyone has a rectum.

PARKER: And now you're bitter.

LANE: I was hoping for more.

PARKER: And you blame this on... what? A lack of education, economic insecurity, everybody's stupid but you.

LANE: It was a teachable moment.

PARKER: When you're a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.
Observe. (to audience) Raise your hand if you have no arms.

No response from audience.

LANE: Help.

PARKER: Now you understand. Why do you think people are sooo angry? What you thought was a lack of rectums, was really a lack of arms!

LANE: But how is this going to stop the "opportunities" from crossing the lines?

PARKER: The question is, do we have a problem of opportunities? Or do we have a problem of LINES?

Pause.

LANE: (meekly) Opportunities?

PARKER: Opportunities are not a problem. Opportunities are the solution. But lines? Who drew the lines?

LANE: We did.

PARKER: And where are we now?

LANE: In a tree?

PARKER: We're at the beginning of a solution.

LANE: But I can't use the shovel?

PARKER: But you can use the consensus. You can borrow, my consensus.

LANE: We're working together.

PARKER: We're going to 'git her done!'

LANE: (hands in the air) Yea!

PARKER: (coaching) Consensus plus "get her done" plus perspective equals-

LANE: We'll redraw the lines.

Parker smiles, hands open to God.

LANE: We'll redraw the lines. It's... like a solution.

PARKER: It's an achievable goal.

LANE: Like you've been saying.

PARKER: Just don't confuse YOU with ME.

LANE: At last, something we agree on.

Lane leans down and begins to erase the line on one box.

LANE: What are you doing?

PARKER: (defensive) Nothing.

LANE: Aren't you going to redraw your line?

PARKER: I'm assessing.

LANE: We have to do this together.

PARKER: Or?

LANE: Or else where's our consensus?

PARKER: You have no faith.

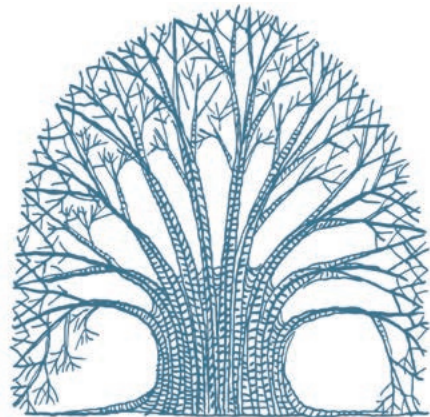
LANE: (realizing) Wait a minute.

PARKER: What?

LANE: Wait a minute. You're not actually going to DO anything. You want me to go out on a... ficus, while you-

PARKER: Gauge THEIR reaction.

LANE: They have no arms.



PARKER: Or they have rectums. You're writing off every rectum out there. Now spit or swallow your chew. Fulfill your promise. Re-draw the damn line.

LANE: This... this, I remember this from my societal bodily movements seminar, this is the MEITIZATION of the problem. That's what's happening.

PARKER: (evasive) You're speaking in hippy 'tongues' now.

LANE: Once I redraw these lines, they're MY LINES.

PARKER: It is the pottery barn principle; you break it; you own it. You try to fix the problem. IT'S YOUR PROBLEM.

LANE: It's OUR solution. We're all signing. I have the mouth.

Lane erases both lines and redraws the lines slightly higher.

PARKER: It's your line now.

LANE: Whoa!

PARKER: Flashback?

LANE: No, listen.

Pause.

LANE: Do you hear it?

PARKER: You're scaring me.

LANE: There's nothing. No outcry.

PARKER: Thumbs up. As I said, "crisis averted." Now we can finally focus on something important.

LANE: Such as?

PARKER: Benefiting from a new perspective.

LANE: Together.

Pause.

An unseen force shoves a pile of empty bottles toward the blocks causing the pile to rise closer to the tops of the new lines.

LANE: This is bad.

FINIS



Thomas Kee is a Part-time Assistant Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance.